

## Utah

M/035/015

## Kennecott Future Tied to Tailings

By Mike Gorrell  
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Environmental effects of Kennecott Copper's proposal to expand its tailings pile north and west will be minimal because of a company plan to replace destroyed wetlands with a 2,500-acre nature preserve.

But prohibiting the expansion would force Kennecott to close its Oquirrh Mountains' mining operation 20 years early, costing Utah's economy more than \$1 billion.

Those are conclusions of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) released Tuesday by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, whose approval of the project is necessary because 1,055 acres of wetlands would be affected.

The document evaluates Kennecott's ap-

plication for a permit to enlarge the pile by 3,500 acres to contain most of the 1.9 billion tons of tailings likely to be produced by another 25 to 30 years of mining in Bingham Canyon.

"We feel good about the application and don't foresee any surprises in the public-comment period," said Fred Fox, Kennecott Copper's environmental-affairs director. "But you never know."

A hearing will be held May 31 at the Utah Department of Natural Resources auditorium in Salt Lake City. Written comments may be submitted through June 27 to Mike Schwinn at the Corps' office in Bountiful.

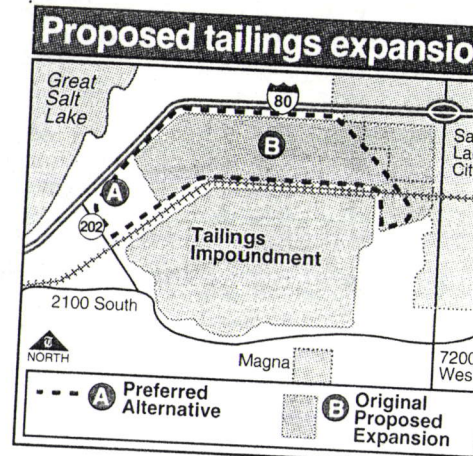
One main EIS conclusion is that thousands of jobs would be lost if Kennecott cannot expand its pond.

The document projected that by 2004 —

20 to 25 years before the Bingham Canyon Mine's ore body runs out — the company would have to shut down. The result: 2,200 Kennecott employees, who make \$100 million annually in wages and salaries, would lose jobs prematurely. Another 6,600 people in dependent trades also would be receive pink slips, losing \$150 million in annual earnings.

In addition, the economy annually would lose Kennecott's expenditure of \$750 million for supplies, equipment and services; \$415 million in industrial output; \$15 million in sales and property taxes; and \$30 million in indirect business taxes.

"The loss," said the Corps, "would be upwards of three decades of a significant level of income and employment for the regional economy."



The Salt Lake Tribune

While the expansion will damage more than 1,000 acres of wetlands, the Corps research suggested mitigation measures.

■ See KENNECOTT, Page D-3

A \$25,000  
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Driving?By Brian Maffly  
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Beer cans littered the wreckage of a pickup truck after it skidded





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# Kennecott Unveils Plans For Expansion

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would minimize the project's overall impact on air quality, surface waters that flow into the Great Salt Lake, groundwater and wildlife.

"There would be a displacement of shorebirds and waterfowl," the draft EIS said, "... [but] the habitat is highly degraded and of low habitat value. Mitigation would result in an enhancement of habitat in the vicinity for wildlife, especially shorebirds and waterfowl."

In the past century, Kennecott has created a pile of tailings — fine-grained material left over after valuable minerals are extracted from ore — that covers 5,700 acres and is 200 feet tall.

Growing by 152,000 tons daily, the pile can hold about 400 million more tons before the weight of its load will make it potentially unstable. That would be especially true if a moderate or large earthquake shook the area.

"An earthquake in this area could cause the fine-grained tailings ... to liquefy, potentially causing failure of the impoundment," the draft EIS said.

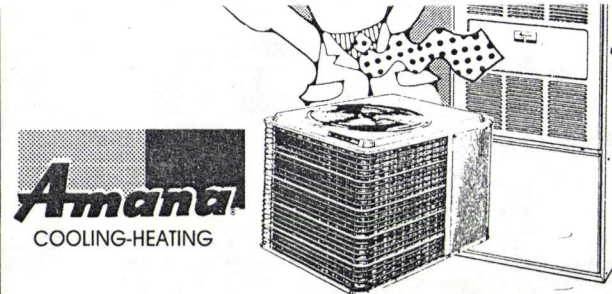
Consequently, Kennecott decided to create a new pile north of the existing one, which will be divided into sections by dikes and seeded with grasses and other vegetation to stabilize the mound. Much of that vegetative work

already is under way to alleviate the concerns of Magna residents, who complained vehemently about health-threatening dust kicked up by northerly winds.

Kennecott originally proposed expanding the tailings pile to the north and east, but switched its focus west when Salt Lake City objected that growth to the east would infringe on plans to develop the city's northwest fringe.

Moving the pile west (its northern border still will be close to Interstate 80) worked out just fine for Kennecott. "It was a positive movement because of lesser environmental impacts," Fox said.

The site will destroy 1,055 acres of wetlands, about 650 fewer than its easterly counterpart. To offset the loss of those wetlands, Kennecott has purchased land northeast of the Saltair beaches for inclusion in a nature preserve.



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